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# A STORY OF TRUST

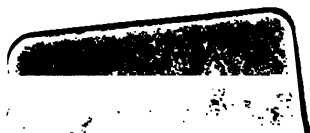
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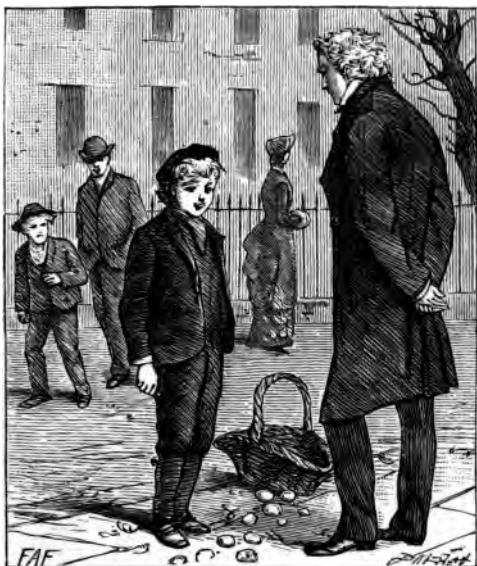






MRS. PETERS' TREASURES.

# A STORY OF TRUST.



A FRIEND IN NEED.

*Page 80.*



T. NELSON AND SONS,  
LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK.



# A STORY OF TRUST

AND

## BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL.

*By the Author of*

*"THE STORY OF THE BEACON-FIRE."*

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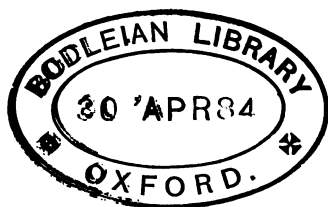


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# A STORY OF TRUST.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A CITY NEST.

ANNABEL RUTHERFORD was a teacher of music. In the large town where she had come to live she was still a stranger, for her old home was far away in a country village in Wales, and except her pupils, she had almost no acquaintances in the great town. Some of these were young ladies who, when once the lesson was over, thought no more about their patient young teacher; but one or two became her true friends, and for the most part the little children loved her.

So Miss Rutherford lived by herself in lodgings in a quiet street, and notwithstanding



her busy life, she was often lonely. And being lonely, certain gloomy thoughts would sometimes come into her mind. At such times she would say to herself, What should I do if I could not get pupils enough to enable me to pay for my lodgings and to buy food and clothes? or what should I do if I were to fall ill, and could no longer teach music? What if I were to get deaf, and could not hear my pupils sing and play?

But when she had been three or four months in the town, one day a lady brought her to a room where a number of poor mothers used to come together on Sunday afternoons to have the Bible read to them, and to talk over what they had read. Some of the poor women who came there were too badly clothed, or had too many children to look after, to be able to go to church; but here they might come with their babies in their arms, and sometimes an old woman would bring a little toddling grandchild who could not be left at home. Every class of ten or twelve poor women had their "lady," who read and explained to them, and who

often visited them in their own homes. Each of the poor mothers regarded her own lady as her particular friend, to whom she might tell all her troubles and her affairs generally.

In this bright pleasant room Miss Rutherford was given a class of eight poor mothers, to read for and to visit.


After that the music-teacher no longer felt herself without friends in that large strange town. Whenever she had a spare hour of an afternoon she would visit one or other of these women ; she knew she was always welcome in their poor rooms. When she sat down in one of them the poor mother would generally quite open her heart to her "lady," and tell all about her joys and her sorrows and cares, about the children she had reared and the children she had lost.

But of all her class no one was so frequently visited as an old woman whose name was Mrs. Peters. One reason for this was that the room where Mrs. Peters lived was so near to Miss Rutherford's lodgings that the busy little music mistress could often turn in there

between lessons, or on a short winter afternoon when there was no time to get any further. And another reason was, that she soon became very fond of the bright, happy old woman, from whom she learned many useful lessons.

Old Mrs. Peters lived by herself in a tiny room at the top of the tiniest staircase you ever saw. It was so narrow that a stout person had to turn sideways and walk like a crab in order to make his way up. It would have puzzled you to find her, unless you knew all about the out-of-the-way corner where she had made her home.

You should turn out of a large, handsome street, into a stable lane, and in the lane stood a good house, in which at one time a shop had been kept; and in a small yard at the back of the shop there was an out-house, which was probably built for a stable, and it was in this out-house that somebody had made that queer little staircase, with the queer little three-cornered room at the top of it. You might expect to find an owl's nest in such a place,



but certainly not an old woman's. There it was, however, and almost as snug as a nest it looked when once one had got into it.

There was a little bed, as clean and cosy as any you ever saw, covered with a pretty patch-work quilt, and two nice pillows in their white covers; and there was a little table with a Bible and a pair of spectacles lying on it; and a little shelf with the old lady's tea-pot and cup and saucer; and a little cupboard that I never saw the inside of; and a little fire in the grate, and a little kettle on the hob; and before the fire there was a little stool with a little woman sitting on it busy at her sewing.

Except one chair to accommodate a visitor, I think this was all that the little room contained; and happily it was all that the little woman needed—if she had had anything more, I don't know where she could have put it.

Mrs. Peters got her bread by sewing; for though she was old her sight was still good. It was indeed very little she could earn in this way, but she thought it enough. If she had

a cup of tea and a very little bread and butter, she was quite satisfied; for old women don't run and jump and frisk about as boys and girls do, and they haven't got to grow bigger and stronger every day, and therefore they are not always getting hungry, and calling out for something to eat, like most of the healthy little folk that I know.

At the time that Miss Rutherford first visited the old woman, the shop at the back of which she lived had been closed for some time, and the house where it had been kept was empty. Shutters were up in all the front windows, and bills were stuck on them announcing that the house was "To be Let." No one could have guessed that there was any person living on the premises, unless, indeed, they had seen her going in and out of the arched passage that led into the yard.

I daresay you will wonder, as Miss Rutherford did, why Mrs. Peters chose to live so far away from other people. The reason was, that when she first became a widow she had been given this little room in return for keeping the


yard and passage into it swept and in order. When the people left the shop the landlord still allowed her to stay, to keep the place tidy; and as she could not have earned money enough to pay for a room, she was very glad to have this one rent free.

Mrs. Peters had brought up children, but they were now far away over the sea, all except one married daughter, who lived a little outside the town. This young woman sometimes urged her mother to come and live with her, because she feared the old woman would be lonely, or that bad people might break into her room and steal her goods, or that some day she might fall ill when there was no one near to help her.

But Mrs. Peters said that if she went to live in her daughter's cottage, she would be so far away from the places where she got her sewing, that she could not earn anything; and she did not like, as long as she *could* get her own bread, to be a burden on her daughter, who found it quite as much as she could do to feed and clothe her own children. Her grand-

children often came to see her, which prevented her from being lonely ; and she was not at all afraid, she said, because she always knew that God was near her, and that nothing could happen to her without his knowledge. He was quite able, she knew, to protect her from sickness and from bad people—that was part of what she meant when she prayed to him, “Deliver us from evil ;” and she took great comfort in that promise which God has given to every one who trusts in him—“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

So old Mrs. Peters was quite happy in her odd little three-cornered room, and on Sunday afternoons she came to the Bible-class. Every one liked to see her there, her bright, happy old face, was so pleasant to look at ; and she used to join in the hymn in a sweet, clear voice—quite wonderful for one of her age. Though she brought no book, she could generally sing the hymn right through to the end. The reason of this was that she had always been fond of hymns, and she had sung them so often when she was young, that she



could not forget them when she was old; therefore she was never at a loss for the words, unless it happened that they had quite a new hymn.

Miss Rutherford's old gloomy fears did not come to her so often after she had got to know Mrs. Peters; and when they did come she drove them away with the thought that when she too prayed to God to deliver her from all those evils, she ought not then to dread them any more.




## CHAPTER II.

### THE OLD SCOTCH WOMAN'S PRAYER.

ONE day Mrs. Peters came into the Bible-class looking even brighter and happier than usual. Miss Rutherford saw at once that she had something to tell, but it did not come out for a little while.

The subject that day was about people who were sick or in trouble when our Lord Jesus was on earth coming to him to help them, and how ready he was to listen to them ; and how he remembered all their wants, and even knew what they wanted before they spoke to him.

Miss Rutherford reminded the class how Jesus was pleased with those people who *believed* that he was ready to help them. He was glad when people had *faith*, and faith




means believing God's promises and trusting him to keep them. That is, when you say your prayers, you must not go away and forget all about what you asked God for, but you must believe that he is hearing you, and that he will give you everything that you really need.

Miss Rutherford had somewhere read a nice little story about this, and she thought these old women would like to hear it too.

It was a story of an old Scotch woman who lived in a cottage all alone, and possessed nothing in the world except what she could earn by working in the fields.

One morning when there had been rain and storm for several days, so that she could not go outside her door, this old Scotch woman made her breakfast with the last handful of meal she had in her cottage; and when the time came for her to prepare her dinner, she had nothing at all to make it with. But she had asked God in the morning to give her on that day her daily bread, and she felt quite satisfied that he would not refuse to give it to



her. So confidently did she expect it, that she put on water to boil for her porridge, and shook a little salt in it just as usual ; then she went into her inner room and prayed again for her daily bread. After that she went about her household work until the water on the fire should begin to boil ; then it would be time to shake in the meal and make the porridge, but there was as yet no meal in the old Scotch woman's cupboard.

Presently there came a knock at the door of the cottage, and when the old woman opened it, there stood the daughter of a farmer for whom she had often worked in the fields. The girl was dripping with rain, and out of breath from struggling against the high wind, and on her arm she carried a basket.

"What a bad day for you to come out!" said the old woman.

"Yes, indeed," replied the girl, "I could scarcely get along ; but father would have me come to you with some meal and provisions. I wanted to wait till to-morrow, but he made

me come at once. I was near turning back two or three times on the way, but I was afraid of father."

"Thank you kindly," said the old woman. "Come in and rest."

So they turned into the little kitchen, and there was the pot on the fire just beginning to boil up.

All the women in Miss Rutherford's class were greatly pleased with this story: they wanted to know where their lady had read it, and whether the person who wrote it had said that it was quite true.

Miss Rutherford said she had read it so long ago that she could not remember what book it was in, but she thought it very likely that it was all true; and many of the poor mothers agreed with her in this, for they had learned for themselves that God never fails those who trust in him.

Then Mrs. Peters could no longer keep silence; she too had her little story to tell, and she was quite sure that it was true, because it was all about something that had happened to herself.

One day during the past week she had been very sick—so sick that she could not rise in the morning to get herself the cup of tea that was always such a comfort to her. She remembered how her daughter had feared that some day she might get ill and lie a long time before any one came to her; for there were very few people who knew that Mrs. Peters lived behind that empty house in the lane. “So,” said she, “I prayed to God to send some one to help me; and I just got up and unbolted the door, so that when any one came they might walk in. After that I felt quite content; for I knew that God had heard my prayer to him, and that he would do whatever was best.


“So I lay down again, and fell into a nice little sleep, until I was waked by some one lifting the latch and asking if I was at home. I said, ‘Come in,’ and in walked a lady whom I had not seen for a whole year. She had only once been in my room before, but when she was passing down the street she found that she was half an hour too soon for the

train that she had meant to go out of town by, and she thought, Old Mrs. Peters lives down that lane ; I will go and sit with her until it is time to start. — Now, ma'am, don't you think it was the Lord who sent her to me ? ”

“ There is no doubt of that,” said Miss Rutherford.

“ Well, ma'am, this good lady lighted my fire and made me a cup of tea ; and then she went out and got me some more tea and sugar and some bread and butter, so that if I could not get on with my sewing for a few days, I should not be without provisions. After that cup of tea I felt better, and to-day I am quite well. Now,” said the old woman joyfully, “ need I ever fear being alone, ma'am ? ”

I have seen people discontented and fearful who, I am quite sure, had not so much reason to be so as Mrs. Peters had. These people were always expecting some trouble to come upon them, and they never thought of telling God what they feared, and leaving it to him



to take care of them. When they said their prayers, they did not really expect that God would answer them. These are not the kind of prayers that please him.

But we read in the gospels of some people who came to Jesus to help them, and he did not answer them for a while. He wanted to prove if they would still continue to trust him. There is a story in the fifteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel about a woman whose faith he tried in this way. And when she would not give up asking him to help her, and would not be persuaded that he was going to leave her in her troubles, he was pleased, and said, "O woman, great is thy faith! Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Well, it happened to Mrs. Peters that God tried her faith too. One day she had a bitter trouble, but God did not leave her long in it, and after that she learned to trust him more than ever.


## CHAPTER III.

### THE NEST ROBBED.

DURING the following winter the weather was very, very cold. The snow lay on the ground for a long time. In the town where Miss Rutherford and old Mrs. Peters lived there were bitter, biting winds, and people wrapped themselves up as warmly as they could both night and day.

Some kind people gave money to buy warm clothes and blankets for the poor, and each of the poor mothers who came to the Bible-class was given her choice of either a blanket or a warm shawl.

Our old friend chose a blanket, and very much pleased she was when she brought it home and put it on her nice clean little bed. This warm new blanket, together with the old






ones, made her very snug. With great satisfaction she showed her lady what a good bed she had ; and Miss Rutherford rejoiced to see it, for she knew that though old folks do not care about having a great deal to eat, they dearly love to have a snug bed to rest in. Their poor old bones ache often, and they do not sleep so soundly as young people do.

The next occasion upon which the music-teacher found time to visit her old friend was upon a bleak afternoon when the gray sky and the ice-cold wind told of coming snow. On that day Miss Rutherford had no lessons to give from her early dinner-hour until five o'clock, and she had taken advantage of the free afternoon to visit some of her poor mothers who lived at the other side of the town.

She was returning to her lodgings somewhat weary, and, I must confess, she was thinking that there was nothing in the world she should enjoy so much as to sit by the fire in her arm-chair and to get "forty winks" in the twilight hour before tea ;—not that Miss



Rutherford was lazy, but she was a hard-worked little woman, and those north winds are exhausting.

But when she reached the now well-known turning that led to Mrs. Peters's perch, the thought came to her that on such a bleak day a visitor could not but be welcome there ; and after hesitating a few moments, divided between her desire for rest and her wish to give pleasure to the old woman, she finally turned into the provision-shop at the corner, expended a shilling in some little comforts to take with her, and then went on, to find that in the little nest, formerly so cheery, a sad and sorrowful scene awaited her.

She found the old woman standing at the foot of her little staircase, pale and frightened, with the tears streaming down her face, and holding in her hand a broken padlock.

It was some time before Miss Rutherford could make out what had happened, for the old woman could scarcely speak for fright and tears ; but at last the sorrowful story came out.

Mrs. Peters had gone out in the morning to see after getting some more sewing to do, and she had but just now come back to find that a great trouble had befallen her. Her door, which she had left fastened with a padlock, had been broken in by robbers, and all her pillows and blankets had been carried off; and not these only, but also a night-gown which she had been making for a shop. Her tiny cupboard had been broken open too, and all her small store of provisions had been taken away!

It brought tears to Miss Rutherford's own eyes to witness the old woman's distress; and when she went into the little room, the sight that met her was sad indeed. The cruel robbers had hung up an old sheet inside the window, so that no one should see them at their bad work. Everything that was worth any money they had carried away, and what they had left was tossed about and trampled.

"We must call a policeman," said Miss Rutherford; and she hastened out to find one.

Should he be able to catch those wicked

robbers? she asked when she had brought him to the spot. Was there any hope of getting back the stolen blankets before the long cold night came on?

The policeman shook his head. He seemed very sorry for poor Mrs. Peters, but he could not help her much. He said she must call at the police station and describe the things she had lost, for it was possible they might be found some day at one of those places where such goods are received; but if that should ever happen, it would probably not be for a long time.

It was then drawing on to the hour when Miss Rutherford had to give a music lesson at her own lodgings, so she was obliged to leave the poor old woman in all her distress. How sorry she felt now that her old home was so far away. Had it been at hand, she would surely have been able to find something which might be some protection against the piercing cold of that January night. Poor Mrs. Peters asked her with tears if she could lend her a piece of carpet for a covering; and it was sad to

be obliged to explain that even this was impossible. She could only advise the old woman to get some one to nail up her door securely, and to go and spend the night at her daughter's house. And promising to come again early the next day, she left her in the midst of her troubles.

## CHAPTER IV.


### MISS RUTHERFORD'S PROMISE.

HASTENING along the gas-lighted street, Anna-bel Rutherford felt sad and perplexed. Should Mrs. Peters, who for so many years had trusted in God and loved him, be left now in her weak old age to suffer, perhaps to die, from cold and hunger? And if so, how could the lonely music-teacher keep on believing that He would provide for her own wants? how could she again advise those poor mothers to trust in him for their daily bread? Perhaps those promises in the Bible meant something else, after all; perhaps they meant that God would take care of people's souls. And yet she remembered how more than once when Jesus had been teaching a great multitude, he had compassion on them because they

were hungry and faint, and he gave them food enough and to spare. And with this thought in her mind she reached her lodgings.

She found that while she was out a note had been left to inform her that the pupil she was expecting would not come this afternoon. After the fatiguing day she had had, this was something of a relief; but a pleasanter surprise still awaited her, in the visit of a friend from her old home. This friend, on her journey elsewhere, was stopping in the town for a night, and she came to spend the evening with Miss Rutherford.

It was delightful to the lonely little Welsh-woman to have a whole evening in such company. They talked long together of old times and old friends, and afterwards of the new kind of life in this great town; and then Miss Rutherford told of her poor mothers; and at last she came to the story of Mrs. Peters, and how her nest had been robbed of its lining, and how she feared that the old woman was now sitting sad and chilly in that desolate little room.



It was a story to touch the heart, and the heart of Miss Rutherford's friend was touched, as was soon proved from the fact that her purse was touched too.

"Could you not make a little collection to supply what is most needed?" she asked, at the same time offering a few shillings to begin with.

Miss Rutherford was doubtful. She knew so few people, and of those there were fewer still whom she could venture to ask for money to supply the wants of an old woman who had been cruelly robbed. But she thought again of how Jesus had blessed the barley loaves and the fishes, which were all his disciples had to give, and had made them enough to feed all that great multitude: so she resolved that she too would do what she could; and when she had mentioned the trouble in her prayers, she felt sure that God had heard her, and would give all that was needed.

Early next day Miss Rutherford, according to her promise, went to see how the old woman had passed the night. She found her sitting



in her poor little bare room, where only the day before she had left such a snugly-lined nest, looking cold and sad, and her heart was heavy.

She had not been able to get her door secured on the previous evening, and she feared to go away leaving it open, lest the robbers should come back by night and carry off the only article of value now left to her, her feather-bed ; so she folded the bed round her and lay in it all night. Ah, how should she get through all the long nights of that bitter winter without her precious blankets !


Miss Rutherford tried to cheer her by reminding her of what she had often said herself, of how God was always near to help her, and how he would hear her when she called upon him.

But she could not take comfort from this thought now. What troubled her most of all was that she was afraid she had displeased God, and that he would not listen to her prayers any more. If God were not angry with her, she thought, he would not allow her, so old and weak, to be left in this severe weather without a blanket.

It was very sad to see the old woman sitting on a stool in that desolate little room, crying and talking in this way.

Miss Rutherford then reminded her about Job—how he was God's own servant, and yet once upon a time sore troubles befell him. His enemies came and carried away his cattle and his goods, and killed his servants, and other great troubles came on him besides; but afterwards God blessed him again, and not only gave him more than he had lost, and comforted him for all his troubles, so that "the latter end of Job was better than the beginning," but taught him, besides, a great deal that he did not know before. Perhaps she was like Job, God's own dear child; and that he desired to try her faith and patience, and teach her to trust him more than ever.

This thought seemed to comfort her a little, but still the hard fact remained, that there were no coverings on her bed, no provisions in her cupboard, and that the neatly made nightgown which she had intended to carry home that day had been stolen from her. She had



counted on the money she should have received for the work to buy her week's coals; but now she feared that the people who had given her the cloth would think she had stolen it, and they would never give her any more work to do. And at that thought she cried again.

In this matter, at least, her lady could help her. Miss Rutherford had herself seen the little room just as the robbers had left it, and so she could go with Mrs. Peters to the shop and explain how their cloth had been lost, and she could also offer to pay for it. Then she told about the friend who had been to see her last evening, and how this friend had given money—"Not nearly enough," said Miss Rutherford, "to get all you will want to make you snug again; but I will try my *very* best to get a little more to add to it. I do not yet know where it is to come from, but God does, and I feel sure he will not leave you without anything that you really need. Will you not ask him for it in faith? Will you not put your trust in him once more?"

At this she really cheered up; she seemed

to be taking hold of hope, for she began to *see* some way out of her trouble.

"Will you do that for me to-day, ma'am?" she asked anxiously.

"I am going about it at once," said Miss Rutherford.

Then Mrs. Peters fixed her poor old eyes beseechingly on her lady. "Promise me," she said—"just let me hear you *promise* that you will not leave me another night without something to cover me."

It was not easy for Miss Rutherford to give a positive promise, but with the shivering aged form before her, and the trembling voice pleading in her ears, it was harder still to refuse it.

"I promise," she said.

This unconditional promise satisfied her. "Now," said Miss Rutherford, "you are putting your trust in my promise; you know that I would not willingly break it to you. You must put even more trust in God than you do in me."

"O ma'am," said the old woman, "do you think God is angry with me for ever doubting

him? perhaps that is the reason why he will not take care of me any more."

"Be sure he is taking care of you even now," said Miss Rutherford. "God certainly desires his children to trust him: but if you have sinned in doubting his care for you, he will forgive you for Jesus' sake; for the Bible says, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'"

This text was a great help to her, and she now became quite bright and hopeful. She said that, after all, she could see that God was caring for her all the time; for he had sent her lady to her yesterday, just at the right moment, to see how all had happened, so that her character might be cleared with her employers.

"It would not be prudent," said Miss Rutherford, "to put comforts into this room again until you have a better kind of lock on your door. It is very easy to draw the staple of a padlock out of the old wood; it can be done quite noiselessly. To show you how fully I expect that we shall very soon have

Provisions in your cupboard and blankets on your bed again, I am going to spend some of this money on a good strong lock, of a kind which cannot be broken without more noise than robbers would like to make here."

"Do so, ma'am," said Mrs. Peters; "that will show our belief that 'the Lord will provide.'"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PROMISE FULFILLED.

As the music mistress left the poor little room she began to consider how she should carry out the promise she had given, for as yet she really had very little notion of how she should set about it. She only knew that God, to whom the whole world and everything that is in it belongs, could provide plentifully. Before this time she had learned from Mrs. Peters herself to bring all wants and troubles to Him, believing that he would help; and now she had to practise this lesson for the benefit of the person who had taught it to her.

The first thing to be done was to buy a good lock, and engage a man to put it on the door—a token that they expected good gifts to come, for people do not go to the cost of buying a

lock when they have nothing that they want to keep safely.

This done, she went to the home of some little pupils of hers, who, except her poor woman, were the greatest friends she had in the place. These little people were very loving and kind; and, like all sweet and well-trained children, they were a pleasure and a comfort to their teacher.

They had often told Miss Rutherford that every week, if they had done well at their lessons, their father used to reward them with a little money to spend as they liked; and she knew that often what they liked best was to help some poor person with it.

When she had told her story to these young people, their kind little hearts were full of compassion. With tears in their eyes they brought their sixpences and shillings and put them into their teacher's hand, to help the poor old woman; and then their mother gave some money too.

After this visit had been paid, Miss Rutherford had to go off some distance from the town



to a school in which she taught a singing-class. This was not a place where she could mention Mrs Peters's troubles. Even if there were no other reason why she could not speak of them, there would be no time for it in those busy school hours. So almost three hours of the precious daylight must pass before she could do anything more towards fulfilling her promise. But her thoughts were busy with the matter while the tram-car was carrying her on towards her work.

On her return from the school she would be free for one clear hour, and after that music lessons must occupy her again till after dark. Only one hour to attend to the wants of the old woman, and how should she make the best use of that hour?

She had now enough money to buy a blanket; but one blanket is very little in such cold weather, and Mrs. Peters wanted a pillow besides, to say nothing of coals and provisions for a whole week. And then there was the lost piece of calico to be paid for at the shop. All this would take more money than Miss

Rutherford was at all likely to get. But surely there were some good people in whose houses were blankets and pillows to spare, and who would willingly give one or other of those articles. That would save the money for the other necessities. If Miss Rutherford only knew where to find those good people! Was there *any one* she might ask? Yes; Mrs. M'Intosh was the lady who had bought the shawls and blankets for the poor mothers at Christmas-time. People who wished to give money for the purpose had sent it to her, and she had laid it out carefully. Perhaps she had some of those things still left; or she might have in her store-room a warm counterpane or a pillow, for people often sent her such articles to give to the poor. Miss Rutherford might call on this lady—she knew her by sight, having seen her at the Bible-class; but the worst of it was, Mrs. M'Intosh did not know Miss Rutherford. What if she should believe her to be an impostor, and refuse to have anything to do with her. This was a terrible thought to the timid little music mistress; but

she had now arrived at the gate of the school, and for a while she must give all her attention to her work.

The singing lesson over, the teacher took her place in a returning tram-car. She must now make up her mind, and that quickly, as to what she would do next. Her greatest difficulty was the shortness of the time she had to act in. True, she had promised only a blanket, and an hour would give plenty of time to choose one, and to send it home to the old woman. But it seemed a pity to spend all the money she had on one article, especially when there was a hope of getting one of the same kind from Mrs. M'Intosh; then, to be sure, Mrs. Peters would have plenty of blankets, but she would have nothing else. But again, if Miss Rutherford were to spend any portion of that precious hour in going to Mrs. M'Intosh, and that lady failed her, she might not be able to keep her promise at all, for there would be no more time to get to the shops that evening. And Mrs. M'Intosh might be out, or she might not have anything

suitable to give, or she might not like to give it to Miss Rutherford. Yet plainly the best thing to do was to ask her, and to leave the result to God. God would not fail, whoever did. And soon after coming to this conclusion the music mistress found herself knocking at the door of Mrs. M'Intosh's house.

That lady was at home—so far good; and better still, she had an excellent memory for faces, and she at once recognized Miss Rutherford as one of the teachers she had seen at the Bible-class for poor mothers. She even told her that though she had never found out her name she had often wished to speak to her.

After that it was easy to tell the story of Mrs. Peters's loss.

Mrs. M'Intosh was very sorry for the poor old woman. She would do what she could for her; but she did not quite know what was in her store-room, neither could she immediately attend to the matter, as she was just going out on business; but on her return she would search her store-room, and if she should find anything suitable, she would send it before night to Miss

Rutherford's lodgings. Thanking her for this promise, the music mistress said good-bye.

Mrs. M'Intosh was very kind and encouraging, she said to herself as she left the house, but I wish she could have given me some idea of what she is going to send. With possible blankets in view, I could not think of buying one, and by the time I have seen the parcel it will be too late. Shall the old woman after all have to spend another night in the cold? Well, there is nothing for it now but to go to her and explain how matters stand. I shall just have time for that. So Miss Rutherford found herself once more mounting the rickety staircase.

Mrs. Peters was far happier now than she had been in the morning, for her trust in God had come back to her. It would certainly be best not to buy anything until they had seen Mrs. M'Intosh's parcel. She did not now dread the long, cold night as she had done; she felt sure that the Lord would send her some warm covering before bed-time; but even if she were obliged to spend the coming night

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in the same way as she had spent the last, she knew He would give her strength to bear it, or he would give her nice quiet sleep, or he would comfort her in some way. No, no, it would be very foolish to do anything in a hurry. For the poor old body had been all her life in the habit of making her small purchases so leisurely and with so much consideration that she was rather shocked at the idea of such hasty buying as Miss Rutherford had been talking of.

So it was agreed that in the evening, after the music mistress had returned from her lesson-giving, Mrs. Peters should come and see what Mrs. M'Intosh had sent.

A weary little Welshwoman was that teacher of music, when some three hours later she knocked at the door of her lodgings, thankful that her work for that day was over. How nice would be the arm-chair drawn up before the fire; how delightful to see the kettle steaming on the hearth! She had taken but a hasty meal at mid-day, and like all weary women she longed for her tea. But for the

moment this was forgotten in her anxiety to find whether a parcel had come for her. Yes; there it was lying in the hall, a bulky parcel directed to her with Mrs. M'Intosh's compliments. Such a big parcel, and so soft, it *must* contain a pillow, whatever else was in it or was not; but she would not open it till Mrs. Peters came—it would be such a pleasure to discover the contents together.

So she carried the precious soft parcel into her little parlour, and put it down in the middle of the table, and then she proceeded to infuse her tea, and while the tea was getting ready she fell fast asleep.

She had not slept many minutes, however, when the little servant came to tell her that there was an old woman at the door asking for her. Miss Rutherford started up and looked puzzled, and shook herself a little, and then she remembered everything.

So out she went and brought in Mrs. Peters to the parlour, and watched anxiously while with trembling hands the old woman untied the parcel. And what do you think it con-

tained? There was a nice pillow and two pillow-covers; a beautiful pair of white blankets, larger and heavier than the best of those she had lost; and a warm quilted counterpane, lined and wadded.

Mrs. Peters cried a little for joy over these treasures as she drew them out one by one from their wrappings. She had hoped to receive a rug or a blanket, and now she thanked God for sending her more than she had hoped or asked for.

When the articles had all been duly admired and rejoiced over, Miss Rutherford remembered her much-needed tea; so she poured it out and made Mrs. Peters take a cup too.

And after that the old woman trudged home with a heart as light as her bundle was big. After this great and unexpected gift she could have no doubt that the rest would all come right.

She lay snugly that night and slept soundly; and the next day Miss Rutherford went with her to the shop where she had been given the sewing to do.



The mistress of the shop was very kind, and when she heard all the story, she refused to receive payment for her piece of cloth. She was very sorry for the loss and the fright the old woman had suffered, and she would not take any of the money which had been given to supply her wants ; but she would continue to give her sewing as long as she needed it.

After that, other people who heard the story gave Miss Rutherford money for the old woman ; so that when she had provided for a full week's living there were still some shillings left. "What shall we do with this?" said Miss Rutherford.

Then Mrs. Peters said that she had for a long time wanted a pair of boots ; but she had never thought of being able to get such a costly thing as a brand-new pair. Should she not take this opportunity of getting a good pair, which should last for the rest of her life ?

So the boots were bought, and Miss Rutherford told her that she was now really like Job, because she was better off after she was robbed of all her goods than she had been before ; and

she said that was quite true. And after that time Mrs. Peters never had any more doubt of God's loving care for her, nor any fear of evil befalling her.

All that I have told you about Mrs. Peters and her troubles and how she got out of them is quite a true story. And Miss Rutherford says that whenever she thinks of that time it reminds her of that verse in the thirty-fourth Psalm, which says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."





**“BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL.”**





## “BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL.”

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### CHAPTER I.

#### DICKY'S FIRST PLACE.

DICKY JOY was the son of a widow. His father died before he could remember, so that his mother had to work hard in order to support her children for many a long year before her boy was old enough to help her. Dicky's sister Patience was three years older than himself. Patience was lame, and for a long time she was very sickly; but as she became stronger she learned to do some pretty kinds of needlework, by which she was able to earn a little money. From the time Dick was nine years old he used sometimes to run on errands, or do a few very light jobs, principally for Mr.

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Stiff, who kept a provision shop not far from the court where the Joys lived. The child was always happy when he could thus earn a few pence to give to his good, weary, over-worked mother; for Mrs. Joy, and Patience, and Dicky all loved each other tenderly, and the only trouble that ever weighed seriously on Dicky's merry little heart was that his dear mother should be so burdened with work and care. You may think how glad he was then when one day, just after he was twelve years old, Mr. Stiff offered to take him as a regular messenger, and pay him a small sum every week for his work.

Mr. Stiff was by no means easily pleased in boys. He had spoken with a great many who came to look after the place before he decided to give it to Dicky. He chose him partly because he knew Mrs. Joy was a good woman, who would bring up her son well, and partly because the little fellow himself looked so bright and pleasant, and seemed careful about anything that was given him to do. Once when he was quite a tiny child, only just able

to reach up to the counter, his mother had sent him to this shop for some soap ; and the shopkeeper noticed him and actually gave him an orange, so that Dicky thought Mr. Stiff must be quite a nice man. But in general the people who worked in his shop were afraid of him.

Of course Dicky had to leave off going to school when he got a place. But he had made good use of his time there ; and when he told the master that he should leave, that good friend said he was sorry to lose him. He advised him to practise his writing and accounts whenever he could, and promised to lend him useful books. Dicky was glad of this, for he and Patience were both fond of reading a pleasant book when they had any spare time.

On a Monday morning he began his work at Mr. Stiff's ; and really, considering what a strict man his new master was, he managed to please him wonderfully well. But what gave the little fellow more pleasure than anything was that his mother said that, now her boy was earning, she would in future stay at home two days in the week, to do the washing and



mending for the family, instead of staying up half the night at it, as she had done before. Patience and Dicky fancied they saw her already getting a little fatter, and her face less worn after two or three weeks of what she called "rest;" so that though it was late on Saturday evening when he was paid, and he was often rather tired, yet his heart was very light as he went home with his wages. And when he threw them into his mother's lap he would give her a great hug, and tell her that some day she should stay at home altogether, and do nothing but keep their clothes and mind the house.

These Saturday nights were quite happy times, for Mrs. Joy was now able to have her washing out of the way and the room tidied up by the time her boy came home. And he would find the clothes freshly ironed airing before the fire, and some little treat for supper; and though he sometimes fell asleep almost while he was eating it, yet he enjoyed these evenings very much, and the next day they all had a rest and a happy day together.

## CHAPTER II.

### HAPPY PROSPECTS.

WHEN Dicky had been about six weeks in his place a wonderful thing happened to him. Mr. Stiff was paying him one evening, and after giving him his wages he made him a present of sixpence, and told him that if he continued to be a good boy he would soon raise his wages and put him to more responsible work. It had been a very busy week, and Dicky had scarcely been able to keep his eyes open while he was waiting in the office to be paid ; but when this happened he forgot all about being tired. He ran all the way home ; and when he got to his mother's room he stood on the palms of his hands, heels uppermost, and turned two somersaults before he could tell them about his prosperity.

Dicky said he wondered how it was that everybody was so kind to him. Mr. Stiff, whom people said it was so hard to please, was kind to him; and his schoolmaster had been kind to him; and the servants at the houses where he delivered goods always had a pleasant word for him. He frequently heard boys complaining that their masters did nothing but scold, and that the servants in gentlemen's houses were uncivil, and would hardly let them stand in the hall while waiting for commands, even when it was raining. He thought it very odd that he should find people so different. The fact was that Dicky himself was the kindest-hearted little fellow in the world, and very obliging. Such people generally meet with kindness in one way or another. You know yourself that it is quite natural to smile back to a person who smiles to you, and to speak pleasantly in answer to pleasant words from another; and that cross words and looks generally bring an answer of the same kind. There was something in Dicky's bright, pleasant little face that seemed to warm

people's hearts, and to make them as good-natured as he was himself. Even Patience's cat—Miss Nellie—knew that he would be kind to her, and she would come and rub her whiskers to his legs, as if asking him to notice her; and lie purring on his knee when he sat by the fire of an evening, though she would run away and hide herself from boys in general. And good reason she had, as you shall hear.

Dicky did not ask why pussy was more civil to him than she was to other boys; but it was for very much the same reason that people were. He would not hurt even a dumb animal, but always did a kind act when he could, not only for his companions and neighbours, but for cats, and dogs, and donkeys, and every living creature that came in his way.

And yet not quite everybody felt kindly to Dicky; he had, I am sorry to say, *one* enemy. Tom Armstrong lived in the same court with the Joys. Tom was an idle, bad boy; and, like other idlers, he would often amuse himself with cruel sports. He disliked Dicky for

several reasons. First of all, when Dicky was a little fellow at the infant-school, Tom, who was a good deal older, had been punished for hurting and ill-treating him ; and though that was now long ago, he had never liked Dicky since. Then Tom was one of the boys who applied for the place at the provision shop, and until Dicky came in the way, Mr. Stiff seemed inclined to take him. Now neither Dicky nor his mother knew that Tom was looking for the place ; but Tom thought they did, and that they must have told some stories of him to Mr. Stiff, or else that shopkeeper would never have passed over a large strong boy to take a little fellow like Dicky.

This made Tom very angry ; and now he was ready to quarrel with Dicky on the first chance he had.

## CHAPTER III.

### AN OWL IN THE SUNSHINE.

It happened that on the very Saturday that Dicky had been promised promotion in a short time, he had been sent in the morning to deliver goods at a place a little outside the town. Dicky always liked going to this house, not only because the housekeeper there was one of the friendly people, and used to give him a piece of cake to eat while he was waiting for empties, but also because it was such a bright, happy-looking place, with a neatly kept garden about it, and the animals there always seemed in a state of enjoyment. Dicky was greatly amused with a large old mastiff that used to lie on the gravel walk in the sunshine, with a great Persian cat between his paws; he had never seen a cat and dog such friends before.

There was a parrot there that had a perch in a window, just above the door where the parcels had to be delivered. This parrot had been taught to cry, "What's your name? what's your name?" in a voice so like an old man's, that the first time Dicky heard it he thought some one was speaking to him from the window; so he pulled off his cap, and answered, "Richard Joy, please sir," though he could not see any one.

The man who had the care of the animals and the garden was coming in just at the time, and he fell into a great fit of laughter, and told the other servants what Dicky had done; so after that they always had a joke with him about taking off his cap to a parrot.

Well, on this day the place looked almost prettier and happier than ever. The crocuses and snowdrops were just coming into blossom, and the sun was shining brightly, and all the animals were enjoying themselves to the full. When Dicky was leaving, he noticed a decent-looking old woman talking at the gate to the man, who said to her as she was going away, "Take care, mother, that you do not lose your

way." She replied that there was no danger of that, because she knew the road so well; and then Dicky noticed that she walked along like a person with very bad sight.

When our little porter had delivered all his parcels, and was just turning into the street where his master's shop was, he came upon this old woman again, feeling her way along, and apparently very much puzzled. She stopped at the street corner, and asked of a group of boys who stood there whether she was going the right way to the "Widows' Houses" in Market Street. Tom Armstrong was one of the group, and he winked at the other boys, and answered,—

"Oh yes, ma'am, you're quite right; walk on straight and you'll soon come to it."

Dicky was very indignant when he heard this, for he saw that the old woman had taken a wrong turn, and would only get further and further from Market Street by going straight on. So he ran over to her and said,—

"Please, ma'am, you are going away from Market Street; you should turn off here to



the right, and then turn again into Market Square. I will go with you part of the way, if you like."

"And who are you, child?" said the dame. "Some one is playing me a nasty trick; how am I to know which of you it is?"

"Please, ma'am, I'm Dicky Joy. I'm messenger to Mr. Stiff, the provision dealer, and I saw you a little while ago talking to Mr. Friendly's man at the gate."

"Oh," said she, "you must be the boy that answered the parrot so civil. Well, child, I don't think you're playing me a trick, or you wouldn't be so ready to tell me your name."

"Indeed, ma'am," said Dicky, "I wouldn't play a trick on an old woman that's nearly blind; I think 'twould be a shame."

"Well, well," said the dame, a little sharply, "I daresay you are a good boy, and would not take me astray; and I suppose you think me very old because you are such a child yourself; but I am pretty active still, I can tell you, and not so blind either. I see well

enough in the house, but I am like an owl, my dear,—I lose my sight in the sunshine.”

Poor Dicky did not like to be called “such a child,” any more than his companion liked to be called “old” and “blind.” However, by the time they reached Market Square they were such good friends, that the old woman asked Dicky to come and drink a cup of tea with her on Sunday. “And when you have eaten the cake I will make for you,” said she, “perhaps you will not say I am blind.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### POOR MISS NELLIE!

DICKY had to run back very fast, to make up for lost time; but he did not mind being a little out of breath, for he had saved this kind old woman a long walk out of her way. Tom Armstrong, however, was very angry, and as Dicky ran past him he called him "an impudent young cur," and said he would teach him not to interfere in his "game" again.

Dicky could not for the life of him see how sending a poor old woman out of her way could be called a "game," but he was in too great haste to reply; and afterwards, in the excitement and pleasure of receiving a promise of promotion, he forgot all about Tom's threat.

He did not forget, however, to go the next day to drink tea with Mrs. Smart. And she was as good as her word, and had an excellent hot cake for him. He found her such a pleasant old body, when she was not blinded with sunshine, that before he left he had told her all about his place at the shop, and all about his mother and Patience; and even about Patience's cat, and how this cat was such a clever animal and such a pet; and that they had called her Miss Nellie, after the lady who had brought her as a kitten to amuse Patience when the latter was not able to stir from her couch for months.

Mrs. Smart was quite pleased with Dicky's chatter, and she made him a present of a pocket-knife which she had had lying by. She was often tired, she told him, of being so much alone, now that her sight was not so good for work.

"Dear, dear," said she, "what pleasant company a child is, to be sure! And so your master is going to promote you? Well, well, you must come and drink tea with me again

when that happens, and bring your sister with you. And won't you carry the rest of the cake home to the poor thing ? I thought you could have eaten it all by yourself. Oh, you must take it. You see, my dear, my son gives me plenty of money, and I have no one to keep but myself, so I can afford to see company sometimes.—Good-bye, my dear ; come and see me again.”

Dicky ran off, thinking,—“ Here is a new friend ; isn't it odd what a lot of people are good to me ? ”

But when he came to a lane that ran at the back of his own court, he saw a sight that made him very hot and angry. Three or four small boys, with big Tom Armstrong at their head, were persecuting a wretched cat. They had set a dog on her, but she had just got on to the top of a yard wall, and there she stood with her back raised, and her fur all standing on end, growling and spitting at her pursuers. Dicky wondered why she did not get quite away from them as she had got so far ; but he soon saw that the cruel boys had tied an old

tin sauce-pan to her tail, the weight of which, as it hung over the wall, prevented her from jumping, while the noise it made was setting her wild.

"What are you doing?" cried Dicky, as he came up,—“what are you doing to the cat?”

“Oh, that’s you, is it, Young Impudence!” said Tom. “Well, you may come and see what we’re doing. I couldn’t catch you yesterday to give you what you deserve, so I’m paying it off to your beautiful cat. You may say good-bye to her now, my boy, for I’ll soon make her come down, and then the dog will finish her. There, go and shake hands with her,” said Tom, shoving Dicky against the wall.

Now Dicky had still in his hand the knife that Mrs. Smart had given him. Quick as lightning he opened it and cut the string by which the sauce-pan was attached to poor pussy. Down went the sauce-pan clattering into the lane, and away bounded Miss Nellie (for it was really she) on to the roof of a house

and down through a broken skylight into a garret.

It all passed in a moment. But Dicky had no time to make his escape. With a savage howl Tom laid hold of him. First he wrenched the knife from him and put it in his own pocket; and I think he would then have treated him very roughly, only that just at that moment a policeman looked down the lane. One of the boys said, "Here's a bobby!" and ran away; and Tom thought it as well to make off too. Not, however, before he had said to Dicky, "Don't you believe I'm going to let you off with that much; you'll be sorry yet, I tell you, for meddling with me."

Dicky was a little grazed and scratched from falling against the wall. He thought he was well off, however, to escape with a scratch, for Tom had been in a thorough rage; and when late in the evening Miss Nellie crept back to her mistress's room, looking very miserable, with a piece of string still hanging from her tail, but otherwise not much the

worse for her troubles, he was very glad he had come up in time to save her. She was so shy and wild, however, that it was some time before she would let even Patience touch her to remove the objectionable string ; and for the rest of her life she dreaded boys more than ever.



## CHAPTER V.

### A BASKET OF EGGS.

So well accustomed had Dicky become to Tom Armstrong's rough words that on this occasion they gave him but little concern. Next morning, when he set off for the shop, he was "as bright as a button,"—wondering as he went whether Mr. Stiff would soon give him anything to do besides carrying parcels and sweeping the shop.

He found his master opening a case of eggs which had just arrived. "Dick," said he, "choose five dozen of the largest of these eggs and put them in your basket. You can lay the smaller eggs aside here; I will sell them for less than the others." And then Mr. Stiff turned away to attend to some other matter.

Dicky had never been desired to sort eggs

before, and as it was a work that required some care, he thought it a very good sign that he should be put to it. He took great pains to handle them gently, so that the whole caseful was unpacked and sorted without one getting cracked. When it was done, the shop-keeper desired him to carry the five dozen in his basket to number 10 George Street.

George Street was at the other side of the town—quite a long walk. Dicky set out very quietly and steadily. He passed some of his old playmates at the gate of the school-house. They were amusing themselves with tops and marbles and all sorts of boyish pastimes until it was time to go in.

One little fellow was trying to turn head over heels—a piece of activity for which Dicky had been quite famous; and for a few moments the little porter thought he would like to deposit his basket in some safe place while he gave just one example of how the thing should be done. Then he remembered that he was now becoming quite a confidential assistant at Mr. Stiff's, and should behave himself accordingly.

He felt himself quite important since he had been set to sort those eggs. How he wanted to tell his mother and Patience about it, and he wondered what he should get to do next!

As he was thinking about this, he turned into a very quiet street, where almost all the houses were offices, and, except a few clerks going to business, there was scarcely any one about at this early hour, when who should he see coming along towards him but Tom Armstrong! Tom did not seem to see him at all,—of which Dicky was very glad; but just when they were passing each other, without a word Tom gave the basket a great blow underneath, the force of which sent Dicky forward upon his knees and almost all the eggs on to the flags! Before Dicky could take in what had happened, Tom had disappeared.

## CHAPTER VI.

### DICKY IN TROUBLE.

WHEN poor little Dicky rose from the flags where he had been thrown, and saw the havoc and ruin before him, his grief was great indeed. Five dozen of the best eggs all smashed in a moment!—some on the flag-way, the rich yellow yolks already streaming towards the channel—some still in the basket, but all mixed up, whites and yolks and shells, in a nasty wet mass, which was beginning to ooze out on all sides; and as he looked and began to understand the whole extent of his misfortune, it seemed as if all his own hopes, all the happiness of his life were destroyed by the same cruel blow.

Poor little confidential assistant! What remained for him now but to be turned off at once, and without a character? Of what avail

would it be to tell Mr. Stiff how it had happened? His master had often declared in his hearing that he made it a rule never to believe a boy, and to trust one no further than he could see him. He had seemed quite inclined to trust Dicky latterly; but now!—and, oh, horrible thought! his mother would be required to pay for the broken eggs—ever so much money—for they were the best in his master's shop. They cost more than his own week's earnings—as much as he and Patience together could earn in a week. His mother would have to work harder than ever now, instead of being almost a lady, as he had meant she should be soon.

All this passed through Dicky's mind in a moment, and then he threw himself down on the steps of the nearest house, and cried and sobbed as he had not done since he was a very little child. He was just beginning to think that perhaps the best thing he could do would be to run away and get lost, so that his mother would at least not have the expense of feeding him; and he was wondering whether, in that

case, Mr. Stiff would still make her pay for the eggs, when he heard a kind voice speaking to him.

“My poor little man, you are in sad trouble.”

Dicky sobbed on. He could not stop all at once ; he could not even look up. Then a hand was laid on his bent head, and the speaker continued,—

“Come, come; when your master hears how this happened, he won’t blame you so much.”

“Please, sir,” sobbed Dicky, still without looking up, “master says—he—he—don’t never—b’lieve a b-b-boy.”

“That’s a pity. But don’t you think he’ll believe me? I’m not a boy, you know.”

Dicky here looked up, and saw the nicest old gentleman you can think of, with white hair and spectacles, and a pleasant, good-natured face, standing on the steps without his hat.

“I saw how it all happened,” said the old gentleman, “from the window of my office, and I will go to your master and explain that it was not your fault. I hope it is not very far away.”

"Mr. Stiff," he repeated, when Dicky had told him—"Cash Street. I think my house-keeper deals there. Come; I will ask him not to be hard with you. He will not refuse to listen to a good customer. But tell me, do you know the boy that played you that bad trick? Why did he do it?"

"Please, sir, he told me yesterday that he'd serve me out for meddling with him."

"And how did you meddle with him? Come, tell me all about it," said the old gentleman kindly, after waiting a while for an answer, for Dicky had begun to cry again.

"Please, sir, he were setting his dog on Miss Nellie."

"What!"

"Yes, sir, and he'd tied a ke-ke-kettle to her tail, he had."

"Tied a kettle to a lady's tail! What do you mean, child?"

"Please, sir, she ain't a lady at all; she's a ca-ca-ca-at."

"Oh, now I understand. Well, and what did *you* do?"

"Please, sir, Miss Nellie was up on the wall, and the kettle was hanging over near to my hand, and I cut the string, sir, and Miss Nellie she ran away up to the roof, and got off, and Tom he said as how I'd be sorry."

"And are you sorry now that you saved poor Miss Nellie from a cruel death?"

"Please, sir, I don't think I am ; but—but master—he'll make mother pay for the eggs, and he won't have me for his boy no more. And—and—please, sir, I think I'd better run away, and not be no more trouble nor cost to mother."

"You are quite sure, then, that your mother would be happier if she did not know where you were than if she had to support you for a while?"

"No, sir, that she wouldn't. She'd fret dreadful."

"Very well, that should settle the question about running away. A boy who does not like to see a cat hurt, would not certainly wish to make his mother fret."

"Please, sir, I won't run away then ; but I



don't know what to do. I feels desperate like."

"I think I can help you a little; I am going to buy these eggs in your basket."

"Please, sir, they're every one of them broke."

"Oh, I like to buy broken eggs: in fact, I think they're worth more than the whole ones. I'm going to pay the price of all the basketful for these that are left.—Here, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Jones!" called the old gentleman to a woman who was dusting the hall inside, "bring a basin, and save all you can of these eggs to make a big pudding.—And you, my little man, run and call a cab, and we will drive to your master's shop. I think this Mr. Stiff won't be so stiff to me. How glad I am I came out so early this morning, and all because I forgot something on Saturday!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### TOO SMALL !

OFF went Dicky for the cab, and came back sitting beside the driver. He had dried his tears, but he still felt very much bewildered. There were such sudden changes in his fortunes this morning, and this one was almost harder to understand than the last ; but he began to have some hope that the good old gentleman would prevail with Mr. Stiff to keep him on.

When the cab stopped at the office, Mrs. Jones was sweeping the flags where the eggs had fallen, and she had Dicky's basket cleaned and ready for him. The old gentleman then came out with his hat on. He made Dicky get into the cab with him, and they talked all the way.

"I must tell you, Dicky," said the old

gentleman, "that I am very fond of animals. I have a cat myself that is a great pet, and I hope if she ever falls into trouble like poor Miss Nellie, she may find a good friend to help her. Never join in tormenting a dumb animal, my boy."

"Please, sir, I didn't never do it, nor couldn't."

"That's right; and don't let the threats of bad boys frighten you from doing what is right. Be brave, and, depend on it, you will not be a loser in the end for any little acts of kindness and mercy you may do either for man or beast."


Dicky thought of Mrs. Smart, and how kind she had been to him; but then he remembered that his interference in her behalf had been the beginning of all his trouble; and as even the present she had given him had been violently taken away from him, he did not see that he had gained much by making her his friend. Nevertheless, he was not sorry he had done it.

When they got out of the cab at the shop

door, Dicky felt as if he could not face his master, even under the protection of the good old gentleman. He remained outside for some minutes ; and when he entered, Mr. Stiff was saying, " Yes, sir ; quite so. It *was* partly my own fault for sending out such a small boy with goods of that kind. It is very kind of you to take his part, sir. Of course I cannot blame the little chap, now that I know exactly how it happened ; but I will not put him in such a position again."

These words left Dicky quite in doubt as to whether Mr. Stiff intended to keep him or not ; and he was so much taken up trying to find this out, that it was not till the evening, when he was telling his mother about the occurrence, that he remembered, to his dismay, he had not once thanked the old gentleman for his kindness.

Mr. Stiff took very little notice of him after that. He scarcely sent him out at all, and did not give him any work that required care ; so that Dicky had very little to do besides sweeping out the shop in the mornings, and



loitering about it all day, longing that his master would see how well able he was for real work. He was so anxious to please, however, and so troubled at not pleasing, that it often made him nervous and awkward about even the easy things that he had to do. This went on for three days; and on Thursday afternoon Mr. Stiff told him that he had engaged a bigger boy in his place. "I wouldn't send you away," he said, "only that a boy that is not able to take care of himself is no use to me. I can't afford to keep a nurse to send out with you."

It was really too bad of Mr. Stiff to say this. Dicky tried very hard not to cry, lest his master should think him more of a baby than ever. "As I think you are a good boy enough, though, as boys go, I will pay you up to Saturday, and you may come to me for a character at any time. I can say I have no fault to find with you except that you are too small."

## CHAPTER VIII.

“IS IT HERE THE LITTLE CHAP LIVES?”

ONLY till he got home could Dicky restrain his tears. Then, after telling Patience about what had happened, he threw himself down on his little bed and cried, only less bitterly than he had done on Monday.

Mrs. Joy and Patience tried to comfort him by telling him that he was not to blame at all ; that he would most likely soon get another place ; and that Mr. Stiff rarely dismissed a boy without saying worse of him than that he was too small. But though he dried his tears, his heart grew heavier and heavier as the days passed and he did not find another place. He would have had plenty of time now to show less active boys how well he could tumble head over heels, but he had no heart to do it. He

felt quite ashamed when he saw his mother preparing to go out every day of that week, as she had done before he was old enough to help her.

On Wednesday evening he was sitting by the fire with Miss Nellie on his knee. He had been talking to Patience over all his troubles, and wondering sadly when any one would hire him again, when somebody knocked at the door. Patience got up and opened it, and he heard a man's voice inquiring,—

“Is it here the little chap lives as used to carry out goods from Stiff's?”

Dicky came forward immediately, and saw Mr. Friendly's man,—the very man who had quizzed him so much about answering the parrot. What could have brought him?

“Oh,” said the man, catching sight of Dicky, “there's the chap himself.—So you and Stiff has parted?—a good thing for you too, though 'twas a shame of Stiff to take on so about an accident.”

Dicky was more and more puzzled. “How

did you hear," said he, "about me and Mr. Stiff?"

"Well," said the man, "we noticed as 'twas another chap came from Stiff's; and master, he'd been telling me how you'd been knocked down in the street, and all for taking pity on a dumb creature; and mother, she said you must be the same boy as showed her the way home when she went astray."

Dicky was beginning to understand it all now. "Is the old gentleman as paid for the eggs your master?" said he; "and is he Mr. Friendly as owns the beautiful house, and the dogs, and the parrot, and the lovely garden? And I never thanked him for being so good to me! O sir, will you tell him, please, that I thanked him in my heart all the time!"

"You'll have the opportunity of telling him yourself, little chap, for you're to come back with me this minute. There's a boy wanting at our place to help in the garden and stables; for my son he's grown a man now, and master he says it's time he should go to a place for himself, and that I must look out for a small



boy to help me. And master he said as he'd like to have the little chap as wouldn't allow the cat to be worried,—for we have a lot of animals at our place, and master's very particular to have them well treated; he's one of the 'Prevention of Cruelty' gentlemen, master is. And when mother told me how plucky you came to help her when the other chaps was fooling her, I says, 'That's the chap for me too.' And mother she told me you lived here. So come along, and make your agreement with master, if you know when you're in luck."

## CHAPTER IX.

### A HAPPY BOY.

DICKY needed no second bidding. Another sudden change had come, and this time such a wonderfully good one that, as he walked along by the side of Mr. Friendly's man, he began to wonder whether he was himself or somebody else. He did not turn any somersaults this time, however, but walked along soberly, as became a gentleman's boy.

Strange to say, when he saw Mr. Friendly he again forgot to thank him ; indeed, he felt so shy that he could say very little, except agree to all that the old gentleman proposed. But when it was all arranged that he should come there the next day, and when, just as he was leaving the room, he turned back and said, in rather a jerky kind of voice, " Please, sir,

I'll like to be a-cleanin' of your boots, because you were so good to me that day I was so miserable," I think Mr. Friendly quite understood that he was not ungrateful.


It had been agreed that Dicky was to make himself generally useful about the place. He was to be taught how to take care of a horse, and how to keep a garden ; and if he behaved well, he was to be allowed to spend part of every Sunday with his mother, and to go to church with her. Mr. Friendly also promised that he should have some time every evening to improve himself in reading and writing, and that he would himself sometimes look after his progress.

The next day Dicky got his mother to come with him to the gate, that he might show her what a nice place it was. It looked very pretty indeed at that moment, for the crocuses were now in full bloom. The sun was shining brightly as Dicky went up the walk with his little bundle. The parrot in the window cried, "What's your name?" louder than ever ; and when no one answered him, he changed his

cry, and said, "Pray walk in, pray walk in,"—which Dicky thought very fitting for the occasion. Then the housekeeper welcomed him, and told him he might consider himself a very happy boy, for no one who entered Mr. Friendly's service ever wished to leave it.

Dicky's new master was as good as his word, for he often had the boy into his study to inquire how he was getting on with his writing and books. On these occasions he always got Dicky to read some verses in the Bible for him, and to repeat a portion which had been given him to learn. He would generally speak about these verses, and explain them in a simple, pleasant way to Dicky. One day he said to him :—

"My boy, I hope you will always remember that God desires us to exercise kindness towards all his creatures, especially towards those that are unable to defend themselves. A great poet once said, 'Mercy is twice blest;' and it is quite true that God blesses it in many ways. You have already found that little acts



of kindness towards the suffering and helpless dispose people's hearts to help and befriend you. And this, I think, is part—not the whole, but *part*—of the meaning of this verse, 'Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.' ”

THE END.





